

Idahos Child Brides: The House Voted Down Bill to End Child Marriage

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Idaho has the highest rate of child marriage in the U.S., according to a national report.

This statistic isn't likely to change soon because the House of Representatives on Thursday voted to kill a bill that would end child marriage in Idaho.

[Under current Idaho law](#), 16- and 17-year-olds just need parental consent to marry. A child under age 16 can marry if a judge consents also.

A bi-partisan [bill](#) led by Rep. Melissa Wintrow, D-Boise, proposed setting the minimum age to marry at 16. Under the proposed law, for a 16- or 17-year-old to get married, consent of the child, parents and the court would be required.



News

Child marriage in America

"This is a great opportunity for Idaho to rid itself of an infamous statistic and that is we have the highest rate of child marriage in the United States," said Colin Nash, who was substituting for Rep. John McCrostie, D-Boise, on the House floor Thursday.

From 2000 to 2010, 4,080 children in Idaho were married,

according to data compiled from 38 states by [Unchained at Last](#), a national advocacy group working to end forced and child marriages in America. The youngest minor wed in Idaho was 13.

In many states the legal age to marry is 18. Wintrow called her bill a compromise. "Instead of ending child marriage outright, this is a modest approach to bring it in conformity with our statutory rape laws."

"When it is legal for a 30-year-old to marry a 15-year-old that is not marriage because they are not equal partners. That is institutionalized child abuse. That is arranged rape," Nash said.

Several lawmakers who spoke against the bill cited government overreach.

"I do not think courts should be involved in marriage at all," said Bryan Zollinger, R-Idaho Falls. "I don't believe there should be a license required to get married. I think two willing people should be able to go and get married."

Rep. Julianne Young, R-Blackfoot, said: "This is a decision I think should belong with families. I believe parental consent, which is what is in the law right now, should be sufficient."

Rep. Christy Zito, R-Hammett, complained that the bill would make it illegal for a 15-year-old girl to get married but not to get an abortion.

In Idaho, a girl younger than 18 can get an abortion with permission of one parent or a judge.

"If we pass this legislation, it will then become easier in the state of Idaho to obtain an abortion at 15 years old than it will to decide to form a family and create a family for a child that has been conceived," Zito said.

In her final pitch to House members to support her bill, Wintrow said the effort is intended to protect children from being "coerced, abused or married off."

The House, which comprises 56 Republicans and 14 Democrats, voted down the bill, 39-28:

House Chambers

Voting on - H 98		AYE 28	NAY 39	ABS 3
Abernathy	Christensen	Gibbs	Mason	Smith
Addis	Clew	Giddings	McCrostie	Stevenson
Amador	Collins	Goestling	Mendive	Syme
Anderson	Crane	Green(18)	Monks	Toone
Anderst	Davis	Green(2)	Moon	Troy
Andrus	Dayley	Harris	Moyle	Vander W.
Armstrong	DellMordaunt	Hartgen	Nichols	Wagoner
Barbieri	Dixon	Holtzclaw	Palmer	Wintrow
Bedke	Ehardt	Homan	Raybould	Wesniewski
Berch	Ellis	Kauffman	Raymond	Wood
Blanksma	Erpelding	Kerby	Ricks	Young
Boyle	Furniss	Kingsley	Rubel	Youngblood
Chaney	Gannon	Lickley	Scott	Zito
Chew	Gestrin	Marshall	Shepherd	Zollinger

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America has a massive child marriage problem:

Source: [IdahoStatesman.com](#) (excerpt) / Reference: [YouTube.com](#)

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